

AS A CHILD SHE TRILLED TO THE BIRDS . . .

When Songsters Meet . . .

Madame Zelanda
and Friend

By Emile



... "He perched on my finger, while I sang to him."

IT did not seem at all odd that Madame Zelanda, coloratura soprano who arrived in New Zealand last week for a two months' tour with the NBS, should be so fond of birds.

Petite and dark, with quick-fluttering eyelids, she had rather the appearance of a small bird herself. And then there is her voice itself, soft, trilling, rising in song like the voice of a lark.

"When I am not in the limelight," she told me, "I go to the bush."

She has made a habit of this since she was a child in Dunedin. Since the age of three, in fact. . . .

She Went Adventuring

AT the age of three, accompanied by her six-year-old brother, the young Zelanda went adventuring in the bush of the peninsula to find her friends, the birds. The two infants wandered there all day, the boy searching for rabbits, the small sister for birds with which she could hold her child conversations. Night and the mist came down. The two wandered on till they came to a creek, the boy carrying his small sister across.

"We're lost," said the boy.

"He insists to this day," Madame told me, "that I replied, 'Damn it, I'm not going to be lost here.'"

THE young girl was to have many adventures since then.

She was to study at St. Philomena's College Convent of Mercy in Dunedin, and later to go to the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music. After Sydney, she went to Italy, there to study under the famous Professor Benedetto Morasco, of Palermo Conservatorium, in Sicily, where she graduated as a prima donna. Later she went to Milan and became a pupil of the late Maestro Manlio Bavagnoli, who visited Australia some years ago for the Imperial grand opera season and who has brought before the operatic public of Italy a number of famous prima donnas.

"IS it still necessary to go abroad like this for study?" I asked her. "Could our young singers have their training complete to-day in Australia?"

She shook her head.

"For the learning of languages, yes, Australia is a good place. And it is most necessary for the student of singing to be able to speak several languages fluently.

"Australia to-day is a nation. Many languages are being spoken in the street. Just before I left 16,000 refugees from Europe had arrived, every boat is crowded with them now.

"And every day one sees in the newspapers: Wanted, pupils for German, Italian or French."

THE student of singing could learn languages there, but as for learning singing—"for the emission of the voice," as Madame put it—there is no place better than Europe.

In Australia, she said emphatically, they do not properly know the art of singing. Young New Zealand students should go to the Continent, to Italy. Of course, even there they should be careful to see they are taught by teachers on the right lines. Even there one can find teachers who can ruin a voice.

At the conservatorium in Sydney, said Madame, there is, of course, a trained director from London.

But the conservatorium allows any teachers to hire rooms there and teach, which no government should allow.

"If I liked I could hire a room there and become a teacher. What control can the director have over what anyone is allowed to teach? It is a wrong principle."

Apprenticed For Voice

IN Italy, on the other hand, the conservatoriums were run by the State, and every student who passed the audition test was apprenticed under a State professor. The student got his tuition free, and the parents had only to pay for his music and his keep.

It was in this manner that Zelanda had her early Italian training. She was given an audition in the Rome Conservatorium, she was apprenticed to singing and put into a class. The Italian Government paid for this training, in spite of the fact that she was a New Zealand singer.

"I was the only British artist ever to enter the conservatorium that way."

FROM Rome she went on to Palermo to the Conservatorium and the University, but found she was too advanced for the classes there, so she went to Professor Morasco.

"I had to pay dearly for that. It was not given free by the State.

"That is how it is done in Italy, and until they do this in Australia they will never advance in singing and in music generally. They are a wonderful people, but I have told them this often.

"I hope when you have your own conservatorium here you will have the Italian system of apprenticing pupils

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